News Releases - 2007

The Canada Council for the Arts announces the winners of the 2007 Governor General's Literary Awards

Ottawa, November 27, 2007 – The Canada Council for the Arts announced today the names of the winners of the 2007 Governor General's Literary Awards, in English and in French, in the categories of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama, children's literature (text and illustration) and translation.

The winners were announced by Simon Brault, vice-chair of the Canada Council for the Arts, and Melanie Rutledge, head of the Council's Writing and Publishing section, at a news conference in Montreal. They will be presented with their awards by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, at Rideau Hall on December 13. This year marks the 71st presentation of the GGs, Canada's oldest and most prestigious awards for English- and French-language Canadian literature.

Nine of this year's winners are receiving Governor General's Literary Awards for the first time. For Michael Ondaatje, winner of the 2007 award in English-language fiction for *Divisadero*, this is his fifth award, tying the record set by the late Hugh MacLennan for the most Governor General's Awards in the prize's history. Other previous winners receiving awards this year include Daniel Danis (French-language drama), Serge Patrice Thibodeau (French-language poetry), Nigel Spencer (French-to-English translation), and collaborators Lori Saint-Martin and Paul Gagné (English-to-French translation).

"To hold a book in our hands is to hold a promise of freedom, discovery and adventure," said the Governor General. "Getting caught up in words and phrases, discovering worlds that others have created, travelling through time and space, accessing knowledge: there is no greater joy than reading! Let us celebrate these writers, those who awaken our senses and lead us down unexpected, unimagined and brilliant paths."

The Canada Council for the Arts funds, administers and promotes the Governor General's Literary Awards. For the first time, the value of each award will be $25,000, increased from $15,000 in celebration of the Canada Council's 50th anniversary. Each winner will also receive a specially-crafted copy of the winning book bound by Montreal bookbinder Lise Dubois. The publisher of each winning book will receive $3,000 to support promotional activities. Non-winning finalists will each receive $1,000 in recognition of their selection as finalists, bringing the total value of the Awards to approximately $450,000.

BMO Financial Group has been the sponsor of the GGs since 1988, providing support for the promotion of the winners and finalists.

2008-00443/

"We are proud to support Canada's literary excellence and join the Canada Council in congratulating this year's laureates," said Gilles Ouellette, President and CEO, Private Client Group and Deputy Chairman, BMO Nesbitt Burns. "These authors, illustrators and translators are a true reflection of the diversity and geography of Canada and its literature. BMO is proud to celebrate their important contribution through the promotion of their works in bookstores, schools, libraries and events across the country."

The names of the winners and titles of their works are listed below, together with jury comments for each work.

Biographical information and downloadable images are posted on the Canada Council's web site.

Fiction

Michael Ondaatje, Toronto, for *Divisadero*
(McClelland & Stewart; distributed by Random House of Canada) (ISBN 978-0-7710-6872-0)

Lyricism and whimsy are necessary ingredients of brilliant narrative language, and Michael Ondaatje achieves this magnificently in *Divisadero*. He establishes, in excellent measure, his mastery of poetic seduction, while mindful to include tenderness, compassion and grace. Grace, after all, is the ultimate gift which Ondaatje offers us in *Divisadero*.

Sylvain Trudel, Quebec City, for *La mer de la Tranquillité*
(Les éditions Les Allusifs; distributed by Gallimard/Socadis) (ISBN 978-2-9228-6846-3)

This collection burns with the brilliant flame of Sylvain Trudel's language as he conjures terrible, unforgettable worlds. To read him is an unforgettable and stunning journey from which we do not emerge unscathed.

Poetry

Don Domanski, Halifax, for *All Our Wonder Unavenged*
(Brick Books; distributed by LitDistCo) (ISBN 978-1-894078-58-6)

Stunningly beautiful and delicate, *All Our Wonder Unavenged* is a deeply moving vision about the intricacies of the everyday world. A spiritual and metaphysical triumph.

Serge Patrice Thibodeau, Moncton (NB), *Seul on est*
(Les Éditions Perce-Neige; distributed by Prologue) (ISBN 978-2-922992-33-5)

This is a long poem on the *solitary being*, imagined, then written like a motif that has been worked in myriad ways in a polished style. The poet's mastery of language is apparent, with a conciseness that never gives in to facileness. Serge Patrice Thibodeau avoids all the potential traps of literary constraints. The verses give and take meaning in a rhythm and voice that are sustained from the start.

Drama

Colleen Murphy, Toronto, for *The December Man (L'homme de décembre)*
(Playwrights Canada Press; distributed by publisher) (ISBN 978-0-88754-595-5)

The December Man (L'homme de décembre) is a tragedy in which the humanity of the characters gives the play a surprising buoyancy. Heartbreaking yet never sentimental, spare yet complex, with a flawless structure, this is a brave and important play.

Daniel Danis, St-David-de-Falardeau (QC), for *Le chant du Dire-Dire*
(Leméac Éditeur; distributed by Prologue) (ISBN 978-2-7609-0402-6)

Revealing the language of a great contemporary poet, this fable by Daniel Danis – terrifying and magnificent, violent and sensual, with a deviant oral character – connects with the great mythological tales.

Non-fiction

Karolyn Smardz Frost, Collingwood (ON), for *I've Got a Home in Glory Land: A Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad*
(Thomas Allen Publishers; distributed by Thomas Allen & Sons) (ISBN 978-0-88762-250-2)

I've Got a Home in Glory Land is a triumphant blend of archaeological and historical research with literary story-telling. Karolyn Smardz Frost uses the flight of Thornton and Lucie Blackburn from slavery in Kentucky to freedom in Toronto to bring the Underground Railroad and its passengers to life in remarkably rich detail. Moving and informative in the best sense, the book will become an instant classic.

Annette Hayward, Kingston (ON), for *La querelle du régionalisme au Québec (1904-1931): Vers l'autonomisation de la littérature québécoise*
(Éditions du Nordir; distributed by Prologue) (ISBN 978-2-89531-049-5)

Annette Hayward sheds a decisive light on the quarrel that opposed regionalist writers and the so-called 'exotic' poets in the first decades of the twentieth century. The result is a resounding success, and a model of literary historiography. With a sober and elegant style, the author combines fine analysis, rigorous methodology and a careful treatment of documentary sources.

Children's Literature – Text

Iain Lawrence, Gabriola Island (BC), for *Gemini Summer*
(Delacorte Press, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, a division of Random House; distributed by Random House of Canada)
(ISBN 978-0-385-73089-1 (trade) / 978-0-385-90111-6 (glb))

Just as the first appearance of a stray dog ignites "a little spark of happiness" in nine-year-old Danny River, *Gemini Summer* kindles subtle yet powerful emotions that linger well after one has turned the final page. Lawrence's story is brilliantly imagined, his prose clear and poetic, his characters irresistible.

François Barcelo, Montreal, for *La fatigante et le fainéant*
(Soulières éditeur; distributed by Diffusion du livre Mirabel) (ISBN 978-2-89607-043-5)

The work by François Barcelo is disarming in its simplicity, even as it tackles the complex theme of intergenerational relationships. Barcelo takes a fresh look at a subject that is as old as it is profoundly human. The voices of the two sensitive characters ring true and the story is well developed. The accessible language is imbued with a tenderness that will leave no reader untouched.

Children's Literature – Illustration

Duncan Weller, Thunder Bay (ON), for *The Boy from the Sun*
(Simply Read Books; distributed by Publishers Group Canada / Raincoast Business Services)(ISBN 978-0894965-33-0)

Duncan Weller's *The Boy from the Sun*, with its striking mix of techniques, lures the unsuspecting reader away from a dark, gloomy and featureless industrial-urban milieu into a brilliantly coloured alternative world of light, colour and hope, which, in a twist in a pictorial narration, turns out to be the real world they were living in all along. This charming, fresh and joyful book perfectly melds story and image, to both deliver its message and form a thoroughly satisfying whole.

Geneviève Côté, Montreal, for *La petite rapporteuse de mots,* text by Danielle Simard.
(Les éditions Les 400 coups; distributed by Diffusion Dimedia) (ISBN 978-2-89540-148-3)

We are dazzled by the refinement and intelligence of the illustrations by Geneviève Côté, and by the simple and effective layout. The use of space and the addition of white reinforce the emotion. The technique of successive, reworked photocopies creates a muted, blurry effect that poignantly translates the fading and gradual loss of memory.

Translation

Nigel Spencer, Montreal, for *Augustino and the Choir of Destruction* (House of Anansi Press; distributed by HarperCollins Canada) (ISBN 978-0-88784-752-3)
English translation of *Augustino et le choeur de la destruction* by Marie-Claire Blais (Les Éditions du Boréal)

Nigel Spencer has performed a tour de force in *Augustino and the Choir of Destruction*, his translation of the third volume in Marie-Claire Blais' trilogy. The poignant and intricate stories of the novel's astonishing constellation of characters are sensitively conveyed through his moving and innovative use of language. Spencer has risen to the extraordinary challenge of rendering Blais' uninterrupted stream of hallucinatory prose into an accomplished and lyrical translation.

Lori Saint-Martin and Paul Gagné, Montreal, for *Dernières notes* (Les éditions Les Allusifs; distributed by Gallimard/Socadis) (ISBN 978-2-922868-43-2)
French translation of *Last Notes and Other Stories* by Tamas Dobozy (Phyllis Bruce Book, HarperCollins Publishers)

Translators Lori Saint-Martin and Paul Gagné have successfully transposed the diversity of narrative registers (journalism, introspection, recollection) and styles, going from the ironic all the way to the grotesque. They have thus recreated the distancing effect of exile, where the bizarre and the familiar are inseparable.

The juries

The finalists of the Governor General's Literary Awards are chosen by independent juries (seven English and seven French categories) appointed by the Canada Council. The juries, which meet separately, consider all eligible books published between September 1, 2006 and September 30, 2007 for English-language books and between July 1, 2006 and June 30, 2007 for French-language books. This year, a total of 1,417 titles, 836 in the English-language categories and 581 in the French-language categories, were submitted.

English-language juries

Fiction: Austin Clarke (Toronto), Eden Robinson (Haisla, BC), Rudy Wiebe (Edmonton)

Poetry: Lillian Allen (Toronto), Christian Bök (Calgary), Christopher Dewdney (Toronto)

Drama: Alanis King (Saskatoon), Daniel MacIvor (Halifax), Joan MacLeod (Victoria)

Non-fiction: Michael Bliss (Toronto), Afua Cooper (Toronto), Maggie Siggins (Regina)

Children's Literature – Text: Deirdre Kessler (Charlottetown), Pamela Porter (Sydney, BC), Simon Rose (Calgary)

Children's Literature – Illustration: Margaret Atwood (Toronto), Michael Martchenko (Toronto), Ludmila Zeman (Montreal)

Translation: Jo-Anne Elder (Fredericton), Louise Forsyth (Calgary), Hugh Hazelton (Montreal)

French-language juries

Fiction: Anne Dandurand (Montreal), Pierre Karch (Toronto), Monique Proulx (Montreal)

Poetry: Beddiari (Montreal), Tania Langlais (Montreal), Michel Thérien (Ottawa)

Drama: Louise Bombardier (Montreal), Antonine Maillet (Bouctouche, NB), Francis Monty (Montreal)

Non-fiction: Georges Anglade (Montreal), Jean Morency (Moncton), Louise Prescott (Montreal)

Children's Literature – Text: Anne Legault (Verdun, QC), Daniel Marchildon (Penetang, ON), Jean Sioui (Wendake, QC)

Children's Literature – Illustration: Isabelle Beaudin (Ottawa), Leanne Franson (Montreal), Pierre Pratt (Montreal)

Translation: Yolande Amzallag (Hampstead, QC), Annie Brisset (Ottawa), Robert Paquin (Montreal)

Bookmark these dates!

Wednesday, December 12, 7 p.m. – Public reading by all Award winners

- Reading by the winners of the 2007 Awards in the Library and Archives Canada Auditorium (395 Wellington St., Ottawa).
- Copies of the winning books will be on sale, and the winners will be available to sign their books immediately following the reading.
- For information about the reading, contact Library and Archives Canada, 613-996-5115.

Thursday, December 13, 6 p.m. – Awards presentation at Rideau Hall

- Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor

General of Canada, will present the 2007 Literary Awards.

- The awards presentation will be followed by dinner and entertainment (by invitation only).
- Media representatives wishing to cover the awards presentation should contact Marie-Ève Letourneau at the Rideau Hall Press Office, 613-998-0287 or meletourneau@gg.ca.

Listen to the GGs!

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and Simply Audiobooks recently unveiled the first-ever collection of Governor General's Literary Award-winning books in audio format in an effort to expand access to Canada's literary best. Eight of the winning titles for 2006 were released, and the CNIB hopes to continue making GG-winning books available in audio format in the future. For more information about this project, contact Shelagh Paterson, Director, Advocacy, Sales and Marketing, CNIB Library, 416-486-2500, ext. 7670.

-30-

Media contact:

Donna Balkan
Senior Communications Manager
1-800-263-5588 or (613) 566-4414, ext. 4134
Email this contact

Carole Breton
Acting Program Officer
1-800-263-5588 or (613) 566-4414, ext. 4116
Email this contact

Interviews with authors:
Diane Hargrave
416-467-9954
dhprbks@interlog.com

In Montreal (English-language):
Christopher DiRaddo
514-842-5087
diraddo@videotron.ca

French-language:
Mireille Bertrand
514-278-6760
mireillebertrand@sympatico.ca

Date Modified: 2007-11-27
Important Notices